

*Kingston, NY* - At a meeting organized in Stone Ridge today by Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers told state and local officials that it was ready to move forward with plans for a feasibility study of flood prevention work along the Esopus, Wallkill and Rondout creeks. The news came during a meeting designed for the Army Corps to give local officials an update on its reconnaissance work for a potential study and subsequent remediation.

"It's now clear that the Army Corps believes there is enough federal interest in the repeated flooding of the Esopus, Wallkill and Rondout creeks that warrants a more comprehensive study that will ultimately lead to remediation to prevent future floods," Hinchey said. "We continue to make progress towards reducing the damaging floods that have destroyed property and endangered the lives of people living near these waterways. I am very pleased that our nation's foremost flood prevention experts agree that their insight can and should be used on finding ways to reduce flooding along the Esopus, Wallkill and Rondout creeks."

At the meeting, representatives from the Army Corps told the state and local officials that their preliminary work found there to be a significant enough federal interest that warranted a full study that would pave the way for flood prevention work. The Army Corps officials said that before their findings are sent to the national headquarters the law requires that a local sponsor of the project needs to be identified. Hinchey, who has pledged to help secure funding for the federal half of the initiative, will continue to help identify a local partner so that the project can move forward.

Last year, Hinchey obtained the authority for the Army Corps to engage in cooperative, long-term activities within the Esopus and Rondout basins that will repair damaged caused by continuous flooding, mitigate against future flooding and remove sediment accumulated in portions of the lower Esopus in the Towns of Hurley and Ulster. Additionally, the authorization Hinchey secured allows the Corps to engage in other projects with economic benefits to communities within the watersheds such as relocating the navigable channel in the lower Rondout in downtown Kingston -- allowing for marina construction and clearing the way for a tugboat museum along the waterfront.

Once a local partner is identified and the Army Corps' national headquarters approves the program, local Army Corps officials will work with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Federal Emergency Management

Agency, Ulster County, local municipalities and local non-governmental groups, to oversee the planning and implementation of a plan to address the many challenges facing these waterways.